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CUMBERLAND COUNTY AND INDEPENDENCE.

For two years previous to the Declaration of Independence each county had a revolutionary committee managing its affairs, independent of the regular government. The MSS. fragments of the proceedings of only two of these are preserved. I have before me a copy of the minutes of the committee for Cumberland county; and these proceedings show that, as in the War between the States, it was the people who controlled, not the politicians. The idea of a few "conspirators" managing the affair was as popular with the British government in 1775 as with the Federal government in 1861, and the idea was equally absurd.

Among the many interesting resolves, the following show who stood back of the famous resolutions for independence of Richard Henry Lee:

"At a committee held for Cumberland county, at the Courthouse, on Friday, the 5th day of April, 1776: Present,—Mr. Chairman,¹ Mr. Fleming,² Mr. Harrison,³ Mr. Pleasants,⁴ Mr. Hatcher,⁵ Mr. Scott, Mr. Thomas Harris, Mr. Mosby,⁶ Mr. Langhorne,⁷ Mr. Carrington,⁸ and Mr. Thompson."⁹

* * * * * * *

"Ordered, that Mr. Harrison, Mr. Pleasants, Mr. Fleming, and Mr. George Carrington, junior, or any two of them, do draw up and prepare instructions for the Delegates in Convention to be chosen for this County on next Court Day, directing them what Line of Conduct to pursue in their future deliberations.

* * * * * * *

"At a Committee, &c., at the Courthouse, on Monday, the 22nd Day of April, 1776; Present—Mr. Chairman, Mr. Mayo,¹⁰ Mr. Fleming, Mr. Hatcher, Mr. Scott¹¹, Mr. Skipwith¹², Mr. Langhorne, Mr. Miller Woodson, and Mr. Thompson.

Thomas Miller is re-chosen clerk of the committee.

Present—Mr. Carrington, jun'r.

Mr. Harrison reported from the Sub-Committee appointed to draw up Instructions for the Delegates in Convention to be chosen for this county, that they had drawn up Instructions for the Concurrence of the People, which he read in his Place, and being ap-

¹ Col. George Carrington, ² William Fleming, ³ Carter Henry Harrison, ⁴ James Pleasants, ⁵ Frederick Hatcher, ⁶ Littleberry Mosby, ⁷ Maurice Langhorn, ⁸ George Carrington, Jr., ⁹ Bartlett Thompson, ¹⁰ John Mayo, ¹¹ Seymour Scott, ¹² Henry Skipwith.

proved, were received by the Committee, and stood as hereto annexed.

Mr. Harrison moved that it be recommended to the People of this County strictly to observe the seventeenth Day of May as a Fast agreeable to the Resolution of the Continental Congress :

Resolved, therefore, that the Resolution drawn up by Mr. Harrison be received by this Committee, and the same was received accordingly and is annexed to the Proceedings of the Day, together with the above recited Resolution, being both read and approved of.

GEO. CARRINGTON.

[Teste.]

THOMAS MILLER, *Cl. Com.*

The Instructions to the Delegates to be chosen for the County of Cumberland on Monday, the 22nd Day of April, 1776, to sit in the general Convention of this Colony drawn up and reported by Mr. Harrison for the Concurrence of the People, and approved by the Committee at their last meeting, and generally agreed to by the People, were annexed to the Proceedings of the Committee at the Time aforesaid, and stand as follows :

“TO JOHN MAYO AND WILLIAM FLEMING, GENT. :

“When the King of Great Britain, deaf to all the humiliating and well intended Petitions from his once loyal Subjects, not only of America, but of Great Britain also, changes his Justice into Severity; when he stoops to the low Artifice of bribing to carry his despotic Designs into Effect, and his first Dignities are Marks of the first servitude; when he prefers arbitrary Sway unknown to the Constitution which placed his Family on the Throne to the Love and Happiness of his Subjects; when the British Parliament so far sunk in Venality and Corruption as to sacrifice their most inestimable Privileges, adding Insult to oppression, have given his Majesty the warmest Assurances, that they will, with their Lives and Fortunes, support him in a ruinous and cruel war against us. When his Majesty, after a wanton Abuse of his Negative on our Acts of Assembly, by which he has forced the Slave Trade on us for several years unmindful of his Coronation Oath, has ordered his Governor Lord Dunmore, to arm our slaves against us, in open Violation of several Acts of Assembly which have the Royal Sanction; when an uniform system through all the Acts of Parliament in the present Reign, tending evidently to the total Destruction of American Liberty, leaves no other alternative

than a base Submission to their inhuman, impolitic and oppressive Measures, or Independency; actuated by a tender regard to ourselves and to our Posterity we think ourselves indispensably obliged to declare boldly for the latter. We, therefore, your Constituents, instruct you positively to declare for Independence; that you solemnly abjure any Allegiance to his Britannick Majesty, and bid him a good night forever; that you promote in our convention an Instruction to our Delegates, now sitting in Continental Congress, to do the same; that they, in their Line of Conduct follow the British Parliament step by step and since all American Property is declared forfeited to the Crown, that they shall endeavor to procure an Act of the Congress condemning the Property of every British Subject residing beyond sea, and every Subject not taking an active Part in the present Contest, to the use of the united Colonies; that they listen to no Terms of Accommodation from the British Court, without a previous Renunciation from the King of Great Britain of all Right, Title or Authority in and over these Colonies and a formal and solemn Recognition of our Rights and Independency, nor form any Commercial Treaty, till they are satisfied of a Removal of their Ships of War and Troops from our Coasts and Seas; that they immediately open a free Trade to all Nations; that they exert themselves in procuring such foreign Assistance and forming such commercial Connexions as they, in their superior Wisdom, shall think prudent. Should any Proposals be made to you, we strenuously insist that you order the Commissioners immediately to withdraw, and refer them to the Continental Congress. And whereas the necessary Expenses of the present War, from a Scarcity of Coin, must occasion an Emission of a Paper Currency to as great amount as will depreciate its Value, a great Proportion whereof will be laid out in Provisions which we have perishing on our Hands thro' a Stoppage of Trade, every mode which tends to remedy the evil must deserve your attention. We, therefore, assuring you of our hearty Concurrence in the present measures, and wishing a vigorous Opposition, recommend to you to procure an ordinance for an immediate Assessment in Provisions when necessary, and that proper Landings be appointed for the Delivery thereof.

“Since we can neither love, honor nor esteem, but must detest the Wretch who hath brought Fire and Sword into our Country, we conceive a manifest Inconsistency in our Act of Worship; we acknowledge his Britannick Majesty for our lawful Sovereign; we

most heartily beseech Almighty God to strengthen him, that he may vanquish and overcome all his Enemies, at the same time begging his Protection, and that he will save us from the Hands of our Enemies, abate their Pride, assuage their malice, and confound their Devices; thus we dishonour him who hath enjoined us to pray with the Heart and Understanding also, and must appear to be rank Hypocrites. We therefore recommend, that so much of the Liturgy as respects the King be altered, that a prayer for the Preservation, Happiness, and Union of the Colonies be substituted, and that the Clergy be directed to use the same on Pain of an immediate removal."

Copy from the Original, reported to and received by the Committee on Monday the 22nd April, 1776.

[Teste,] THOMAS MILLER, *Cl. Com.*"

THE STAMP ACT.

In the excitement succeeding the passage of the Stamp Act Virginia "rang the alarm bell for the continent." The resolves offered by Patrick Henry united the people everywhere in opposition. And yet, while there was much official talk and private action, it does not seem that in any colony was there much *official* action. Northampton court, in Virginia, appears to have been the first public authority to inhibit the operation of the law:

"Virginia—sc.:

"At a court held for Northampton county, Feb. 8, 1766:

"On the motion of the clerk and other officers of this court praying their opinion whether the act entitled 'An Act for granting and applying certain Stamp Duties and other Duties in America,' etc., was binding on the inhabitants of this colony, and whether they, the said officers, should incur any penalties by not using stamped paper agreeable to the directions of the said act, the court unanimously declared it to be their opinion that the said act did not bind, affect, or concern the inhabitants of this colony, inasmuch as they conceive the same to be unconstitutional, and that the said several officers may proceed to the execution of their respective offices, without incurring any penalties by means thereof, which opinion this court doth order to be recorded.

GRIFFIN STITH, *C. N. C.*"